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C O N F I D E N T I A L OSLO 000465

SIPDIS

FOR INR/REA (RAYMOND DALLAND), EUR/RUS, AND EUR/NB

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [NO](#) [RU](#)  
SUBJECT: HISTORIC MEETING BETWEEN CHECHEN ADVERSARIES IN  
OSLO

Classified By: Political/Economic Counselor Cherrie Daniels for reasons  
1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. (SBU) Summary: On July 23 and 24, the London-based "Chechnya Peace Forum" convened a meeting in Oslo between Dukhvakha Abdurakhmanov (Chairman of the Chechen parliament and representative of the Kadyrov government) and Akhmed Zakaev (representative of the Maskhadov continuation government). This is the first public meeting that has occurred between the two sides, and the statements given by the parties in a press release afterward promise a "peaceful resolution" with the goal of "political stability." Post spoke with the Norwegian MFA and with the facilitator of the meeting--the Director of the Chechnya Peace Forum, but details on what happened in the room are not available. The press release from the meeting with the exact statements of the parties can be obtained at:  
[http://www.chechnyapeaceforum.com/upload/news media press 14.pdf](http://www.chechnyapeaceforum.com/upload/news_media_press_14.pdf). End Summary.

THE MFA'S TAKE ON THE MEETING  
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¶2. (C) In response to press reports about the meeting, post contacted Odd Skagestad, acting head of the Russia Section of the MFA. Skagestad said that he was phoned directly by Ivar Amundsen, a Norwegian businessman unknown to him, asking him to take notice of the meetings, which Amundsen characterized as "initial meetings that will open up negotiations between the exiled government and the internal government." Amundsen said that these meetings have been sanctioned by Russian President Medvedev. Skagestad said that that's all the government of Norway knows: there was no one from the MFA or Norwegian government present at the meetings. Press reports indicate that representatives of the Russian embassy were at the meetings.

¶3. (C) Opining "off the record," Skagestad said that "in my personal opinion, Zakaev is the, or at least a, legitimate representative not just of the Chechen exile community, but of Chechens in Chechnya." He further stated that as far as he knows, Zakaev is on various interpol lists; he expressed bemused wonderment that Zakaev has been able to travel so freely in Europe. When asked why he has not been arrested in Norway, Skagestad said, "oh, that's not a question for this ministry, you may want to go ask PST (Norway's FBI)." Going further down this tangent, Skagestad said that he believes the reason Zakaev is on the referenced interpol lists goes back to September 11, when Putin, in order to curry favor with the US and the West, named many people "terrorists." Comment: Skagestad seemed to poloff to have gone down this tangent to mildly rebuke what he sees as the USG's tolerance of Russia naming people "terrorists" in order to cleanse the country of internal opposition. End comment.

#### IVAR AMUNDSEN'S COMMENTS

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¶4. (C) Next, poloff contacted Norwegian citizen Ivar Amundsen, Director of the "Chechnya Peace Forum" (website: [www.chechnyapeaceforum.com](http://www.chechnyapeaceforum.com)). When asked why he became involved in the forum, he spoke in generalities, but allowed that he had been very moved by the death of his friend, Alexander Litvinenko. Amundsen was initially very-tight lipped, and said that he had not been in the room during many of the meetings. When prodded, he made the following remarks:

¶5. (C) "I am of course delighted that these meetings have taken place. The Chechnya Peace Forum was very pleased when we saw that the two parties had come to the conclusion that they wanted to go into negotiations. This is the first time since the Russians installed their government in Chechnya that they've been willing to go into talks with the opposition. I believe Kadyrov wants these talks for personal reasons, but they have also been approved in Moscow, both by Medvedev and presidential aide Vadislav Surkov. This is only the start of a process, and all parties have an intention of going further. We plan more meetings between the parties next month in London."

#### PUBLIC STATEMENTS BY THE TWO PARTIES

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¶6. (U) From the press release, the statement of Abdurakhmanov was as follows: "The objective of my recent meetings in Oslo with Mr. Akhmed Zakaev has been to establish political stability for the ultimate goal of consolidating the Chechen nation."

¶7. (U) From the same press release, the comments of Zakaev were as follows: "The peaceful resolution of political issues is the only real guarantee of stability and every Chechen who cares about the future of the Chechen people, irrespective of his or her political platform, should participate in the burgeoning (sic) political process."  
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